



**United States Department of Justice  
United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**

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## **News Release**

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### **18 charged in connection with large indoor marijuana grow operation**

Eighteen defendants were charged today in federal court in connection with a large indoor marijuana grow operation of more than 3,300 plants.

Charged with one count of conspiracy to manufacture at least 1,000 marijuana plants are: Johnny Cuong Tran, 36, Brooklyn Center; Tuan Van Nguyen, 41, Maple Grove; Nhuan Van Nguyen, 58, Maple Grove; Kevin Dinh Phan, 43, Blaine; Tuan Ngoc Pham, 39, Savage; Kenny Thai Tran, 25, Brooklyn Center; Hoa Thai Tran, 22, Brooklyn Center; Dat Thai Tran, 27, Woodbury; Vinh Xuan Hoang, 32, Brooklyn Park; Phung Duc Hoang, 29, Brooklyn Park; Doai Long Hoang, 40, Savage; Minh Duong, 34, Brooklyn Park; Winston Nguyen, 32, Austin; Hao Thi Doan, 36, Austin; Annie Huyen Vu, 36, New Hope; Timothy Quang Tran, 41, Shakopee; Thai Van Ngo, 34, Savage; and Phuong The Cong, 28, Shakopee.

Their criminal complaint alleges that from February 2009 through June 30, 2009, the defendants conspired to manufacture 1,000 or more marijuana plants. Thirteen of the defendants made their initial appearances today in federal court.

According to a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) affidavit, on June 30 search warrants were executed at various locations throughout the Twin Cities in connection with a suspected large-scale marijuana conspiracy. At six of the locations, active indoor marijuana cultivation or "grow" operation was observed, including marijuana plants, lighting and other equipment.

In each residence, the power was stolen by tapping into the electrical panel before the meter. The six active grow residences were in Coon Rapids (923 plants seized), Elk River (576 plants seized), Lake St. Croix Beach (630 plants seized), Ramsey (637 plants seized), Savage (383 plants seized) and Shakopee (160 plants seized).

Police also seized approximately \$13,000 from the Coon Rapids residence; approximately

\$112,000 at a Blaine residence; approximately \$68,000 at the Shakopee residence; approximately \$32,000 at a Maple Grove residence; and approximately 3 pounds of harvested marijuana at a Brooklyn Park residence.

Evidence of dismantled marijuana grows were discovered in Cottage Grove, St. Michael and St. Paul Park. In the garbage left at the curb of the St. Paul Park residence, police discovered marijuana leaves and stems, gloves with marijuana residue and other items commonly used in grow operations.

According to the affidavit, law enforcement conducted surveillance at the various locations and observed the defendants traveling back and forth from the residences. On June 8, officers discovered 9.5 pounds of harvested marijuana in the trunk of Phuong The Cong's vehicle following a traffic stop.

"I am grateful to our partners in law enforcement for assisting in this investigation, and I'm especially proud that the West Metro Drug Task Force and the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office began the work on this case," said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek. "The officers and deputies put in countless hours on this investigation and their efforts successfully dismantled one of the largest drug operations of its kind in Minnesota."

"This collaborative enforcement operation directly attacks the disturbing trend of indoor marijuana growing operations surfacing in Minnesota," said Gary Olenkiewicz, Special Agent in Charge of the DEA's Chicago Field Division, which oversees the Minneapolis District Office. "The charging of 18 individuals and the seizure of over 3,300 marijuana plants and numerous assets signifies the end of this organization. The DEA Task Force, Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, West Metro Drug Task Force, and other law enforcement partners will continue to join forces and target those organizations that are threatening the health and safety our citizens and negatively impacting our economy through the destruction of homes in our neighborhoods and stealing public services."

If convicted, the defendants each face a potential maximum penalty of life in prison. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge. This case is the result of an investigation by the West Metro Drug Task Force, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office and the DEA, with assistance from the St. Paul Police Department's Narcotics Unit, the Washington County Drug Task Force, the Ramsey County Drug Task Force, the Dakota County Drug Task Force, the Anoka-Hennepin Drug Task Force, the Southwest Hennepin Drug Task Force, the Southwest Metro Drug Task Force, the Northwest Drug Task Force, the Sherburne County Drug Task Force, the Wright County Drug Task Force, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Violent Offender Task Force, the Chicago Financial Investigative Team, the DEA Airport Interdiction Group, the U.S. Marshals Service and other local law enforcement. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney LeeAnn K. Bell.